

Key to ZEPHANIAH

1. STATISTICS:

Writer, Zephaniah, prophet to Judah was a great-great-grandson of one Hizkiah, believed by many to be King Hezekiah. He would thus be of royal lineage. Little is known of this prophet whose name means "JEHOVAH has guarded." His ministry (638-608 B.C.) was in the reign of King Josiah which makes him the first of the Chaldean prophetic messengers. Key thought, the coming day of GOD's wrath; key verse, 1:14-16.

2. THEME:

The Kingdom of Judah apparently was to have profited from the experience of Israel's captivity, for GOD sent no prophet to them during the reign of wicked King Manasseh until Zephaniah. The revival under Josiah soon degenerated with the idea of tolerance allowing anyone to choose his own religion. This, GOD could not allow, and Zephaniah was sent to call attention to certain judgment unless complete repentance followed.

3. OUTLINE:

Day of wrath for Judah (1)

Day of wrath for the nations (2)

Day of wrath for Jerusalem with coming blessing (3)

4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Zephaniah's prophecy was the most comprehensive of all prophetic utterances, spoken as it were, to all nations under Heaven. The phrase "great day of the LORD," or similar words, is emphasized in 1:7 and repeated nine times through chapters 1-3.

5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

Above all other prophets, Zephaniah sees the entire earth as the theater of GOD's universal government. From every quarter nations are chosen as examples of His judgment (2:4-15), but Judah failed to learn the lesson.

The prophecy regarding the four cities of Philistia shows that prophecy and providence are guided by the same hand.

6. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

It is true that GOD is love. But this is not the entire description of the character of GOD. He is also wrath against all ungodliness, wherever it is found.

~ end of Zephaniah ~